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In This Issue

- ROKG to Introduce Low Carbon & Green Growth Bill
- South Korea's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Up Slightly in 2006
- Government Identifies 17 Projects for East Asia Climate Partnership
- South Korea's 2008 Nuclear Reactor Operational Rate Topped 93 Percent
- Korea Completes Construction of High-Tech Radio Telescope Array
- Korea to Build Global Research Campus at Incheon, Including Stony Brook and other International Universities
- Korea's New HIV Cases Increased by 7 Percent in 2008 to 797
- Smoking Rate Rising Slightly to 22.3 Percent with Huge Gender Gap
- Tamiflu-Resistant Seasonal Influenza Virus Reported in Korea
- Hospitals Allowed to Advertise for International Patients

----- ENVIRONMENT -----

ROKG to Introduce Low Carbon & Green Growth Bill

1. The ROKG has issued a public notice on the upcoming introduction of legislation of a "Basic Law on Low Carbon, Green Growth." The draft bill will be an amalgamation of three programs:

A) The Basic Law on Climate Change: Draft legislation that had already been pending at the National Assembly. The Basic Law on Climate Change aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by expanding the construction of nuclear power plants, investing in the development of new and renewable energy such as hydrogen fuel cells and photovoltaic cells, adopting a cap-and-trade system for business and industry, and establishing greenhouse gas reporting requirements for greenhouse gas emitting industries.

B) The Green New Deal: A four-year program intended to create nearly one million jobs mostly through government funding of green infrastructure projects. The projects include restoration of the country's four major rivers, building nearly 1300 kilometers of bicycle trails alongside the rivers and linking them with existing bicycle paths, construction of waste recycling facilities, and expansion of bus and rail mass transit systems.

C) New Growth Engines: Seventeen technologies identified by the Ministry of Knowledge Economy as future growth engines for the Korean economy. The technologies include new and renewable energy, CO2 capture and sequestration, LED lighting applications, robotics, water management technologies such as dam construction, desalination, and waste water treatment, and biomedicine and bio-medical equipment manufacture.



2. Some overlap occurs among the three program entities that comprise the "Basic Law on Low Carbon, Green Growth." For example, funding for R&D of new and renewable energy is a significant feature of all three.

3. To manage, monitor, and assess the activities outlined in the draft legislation, the government will establish a Committee for Green Growth under the President's office. The Committee also will advise the President on "green growth" policies and strategies.

SEOUL 00000318 002 OF 004

South Korea's Greenhouse Gas Emissions Up Slightly in 2006

4. South Korea's greenhouse gas emission levels edged up slightly in 2006 compared to the year before, a Ministry of Knowledge Economy (MKE) report said on February 2. The country's annual greenhouse gas inventory report showed that 599.5 million carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) tons were released into the atmosphere in 2006, up 0.9 percent from 594.4 million CO₂e tons tallied for 2005, the report said. The report noted that construction of power plants and increased numbers of cars on the roads accounted for the small increase.

5. MKE said greenhouse gas output increased 1.4 percent in the power generation sector, 2.7 percent in transportation, and 2.9 percent in waste disposal treatment. Industrial sector greenhouse gas emissions fell slightly as the country's petrochemical and cement sectors reduced output and companies moved to incorporate clean development mechanisms (CDM) into their manufacturing processes.

6. The report said that the 2006 emissions of 599.5 million CO₂e tons were 101 percent higher than South Korea's 1990 greenhouse gas output of 298.1 million CO₂e tons. According to the most recent international data available (2005), South Korea ranks as the world's 10th largest CO₂ emitter and the 15th largest overall greenhouse gas emitter (as measured in CO₂e).

Government Identifies 17 Projects for East Asia Climate Partnership

7. The Ministry of Knowledge Economy (MKE) has identified 17 projects to kick off the East Asia Climate Partnership that President Lee Myung-bak announced at July's G-8 Summit. The Partnership is intended to assist developing countries in Asia (primarily the ASEAN countries, but also China and India) in their efforts to mitigate global warming. MKE has allocated 18.2 billion won (USD 13.5 million) for the 17 projects, which fall into three categories -- new and renewable energy (12.3 billion won), establishment of infrastructure (2.9 billion won), and cooperation with international organizations (3 billion won).



Science & Technology

South Korea's 2008 Nuclear Reactor Operational Rate Topped 93 Percent

8. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology said in January that the average operational rate (the percentage of time that facilities are actually operating) of the country's commercial nuclear power reactors is estimated to have reached an average of 93.4 percent in 2008. The figure is a gain from the 90.3 percent tallied in 2007, and higher than the 91 percent and 76 percent rates reached by the nuclear industries of the United States and France, respectively. During the year 2008, South Korea's 20 nuclear power reactors experienced 14 mechanical problems, nine of which required a temporary halt in power generation.

9. At present, Korea ranks sixth in terms of total energy produced by nuclear reactors after the United States, France, Japan, Russia and Germany. Nuclear power plants provide approximately 36 percent

SEOUL 00000318 003 OF 004

of the country's electrical power supply. That figure is expected to increase to 59 percent with 12 new reactors coming on line by 2030.

Korea Completes Construction of High-Tech Radio Telescope Array

10. The U.S.-based Science magazine reported that Korea has completed construction of the last of three 21-meter radio telescopes in its Korean Very Long Baseline Interferometry (VLBI) Network on December 2. Perched on a hilltop at Yonsei University in Seoul, the 21-meter radio antenna telescope simultaneously captures data on energy emitted at four different frequencies (22, 43, 86, and 129 gigahertz) from stars and other galactic objects, something no other telescope can do.

11. Korea's radio telescope array is linked to arrays in Japan and China, creating the East Asia VLBI Network, which comprises 19 antennas scattered over 6000 kilometers from Urumqi in northwestern China to Kunming in China's southwest to Hokkaido and the remote Ogaswara Island of Japan. Together, the three countries will use the arrays to refine and extend the map of the Milky Way, plotting the evolution and movement of each star to reveal the dynamics of the galaxy. A second objective is to study Active Galactic Nuclei (AGNs), supermassive black holes believed to lie at the center of most galaxies. To combine data from the national arrays, Japan and Korea plan to jointly build a specialized computer called a correlator in Seoul and have it up and running by the end of 2009.

Korea to Build Global Research Campus at Incheon, Including Stony Brook and other International Universities



12. The government will set aside 40 billion won (USD 30 million) this year to establish a global research-education campus in Songdo at the Incheon Free Economic Zone about 40 km west of Seoul, the Ministry of Knowledge Economy said on February 3. The opening of the campus is planned for 2010. The campus will house up to 10 local and foreign universities and will be composed of between 4 and 10 branches of local and foreign universities that will pool resources to conduct research and educate students in cutting edge technologies.

13. MKE said the State University of New York at Stony Brook has agreed to establish a college at the campus, while the State University of North Carolina is close to signing a similar contract. Talks are underway with Britain's Surry University and Delaware State University. Yonsei, Inha and other local universities are currently soliciting interest among other foreign schools. The Salk Institute, a non-profit scientific research institute based in California, established a Center for Biology at Songdo late last year.

Health

Korea's New HIV Cases Increased by 7 Percent in 2008 to 797

14. The Korea Center for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) said in a February 2 preliminary report that the number of new HIV cases among Korean citizens totaled 797 in the year 2008. That brings to 6,120 the number of officially-recorded HIV cases among Korean

SEOUL 00000318 004 OF 004

citizens since 1985.

15. The infection pathway was identified for 459 of the 797 new cases recorded last year. Of those, 58 percent (234 males and 34 females) contracted the virus through heterosexual contact, and 42 percent through homosexual contact. None of the new cases contracted the virus through intravenous drug use or mother-to-child transmission. Of the cumulative 6,120 officially-recorded HIV carriers (5,604 males and 516 females), 1,084 have died and 783 have been diagnosed with active cases of AIDS.

16. The number of new cases in 2008 represents an increase of 7.1 percent over the 744 new cases reported in 2007. Because of the still very low absolute numbers, fluctuations in annual percent increases may appear to be overstated. The annual rate of increase in new HIV cases in Korea has been slowing slightly in the most recent years. It actually decreased by nearly one percent from 2006 to 2007.

Smoking Rate Rising Slightly to 22.3 Percent with Huge Gender Gap



17. About 22.3 percent of Korean adults aged over 19 smoke, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs said on January 2. According to an end-of-year government survey of 1,484 males and 1,522 females aged over 19, the smoking rate was higher than the 21.9 rate recorded mid-year. Among men, the rate was 40.9 percent, up from 40.4 percent six months ago. The female smoking rate stood at 4.1 percent, up from 3.7 percent. A ministry official cited the stress of worsening economic conditions among the factors behind the slight rise.

Tamiflu-Resistant Seasonal Influenza Virus Reported in Korea

18. The Korean Center for Disease Control reported January 9 that during a surveillance program from September 7 to December 13, it isolated 220 influenza A/H1N1 viruses from humans (type A/subtype H1N1 is a seasonal influenza virus that circulates worldwide). Seventeen of the viruses were tested for anti-viral drug resistance, and 16 of the 17 were found to be resistant to Tamiflu (oseltamivir). The findings correlate with testing performed in other countries that demonstrates a significant increase in the prevalence of oseltamivir resistance among influenza A/H1N1 viruses worldwide. The findings are significant because oseltamivir continues to be the drug of choice for treating influenza.

Hospitals Allowed to Advertise for International Patients

19. The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Family Affairs said on January 9 that it will allow Korean hospitals to engage in advertising and other activities aimed at attracting patients from abroad as part of efforts to internationalize the medical service sector. The directive will go into effect in April, the Ministry said.

STEPHENS

